

THE MARCONI SCANDAL, by Frances Donaldson. Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc. (\$5.75). A detailed account of the celebrated Marconi affair. In 1912 Herbert Samuel, Postmaster-General in H. H. Asquith's cabinet, let a contract to the Marconi Company to build a chain of wireless stations to link the British Empire. News of the contract and of negotiations involving the American Marconi Company, which was an entirely independent concern, led to intense speculative activity and a sevenfold increase in the price of British shares. The manager of British Marconi was Godfrey Isaacs, brother of Sir Rufus Isaacs, Attorney-General in Asquith's government. Soon after the government accepted the tender of British Marconi, Godfrey Isaacs came to the U.S., helped to reorganize American Marconi, underwrote a large new stock issue and acquired for his services a substantial block of stock. On his return to England he sold some of this stock to his brother Rufus—who in turn made a portion of the shares available to Lloyd George and other highly placed members of Asquith's cabinet. Rumors of behind-the-scenes hanky-panky were intensified when British and American Marconi shares fell almost as quickly as they had risen. Several unsavory journalists, among them Cecil Chesterton (G. K.'s brother) and the twisted Hilaire Belloc, a virulent anti-Semite, began writing stories accusing Herbert Samuel, Rufus Isaacs, his brother and others of having enriched themselves at public expense and of having taken advantage of inside information

to make a killing in the market by obtaining the shares at a low price and dumping them after they had risen. These men, it was charged, were corrupt; worse, they were cunning Jews who had engaged in a conspiracy to drain the blood of innocent Gentiles. The attacks continued for many months but unfortunately none of the accused responded to them as fully and as forthrightly as they should have done. When the government could no longer afford to disregard the rumors and charges, a special Parliamentary committee was appointed to take testimony on the entire affair. The committee reported back to Parliament, and after long and bitter debate the House, along more or less party lines, exonerated the Attorney-General and the others from any wrongdoing. Although none of the central characters suffered in his subsequent career (Sir Rufus, for example, became Lord Chief Justice of England and Viceroy of India), the affair left doubts and an unpleasant aftertaste. Mrs. Donaldson, while fully preserving the dramatic flavor of the events, gives a fair appraisal based on a meticulous examination of official records and contemporary journals.